

THE NEW WORLD
AND
ITS NEW SECTS.

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE DEGREES
OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND MASTER OF ARTS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROSTOCK

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ROSTOCK: ADLER'S HEIRS.

1868.

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America presents at the present time so many singular and significant phenomena, that it is only when we collect, classify, and meditate upon them, that their importance in the history of the civilisation of the present century can be realized. The object of this thesis is to enumerate some of the most striking characteristics of this new and great nation, and indicate results to which they are tending.

To the casual observer America presents the aspect of a vast, wealthy, and highly civilized community, which has sprung into being and power almost in a day — the growth of the young giant is the marvel of the present age — the country has gained its independence within the memory of living men — the population is ten times as great now, as it was at the commencement of this century; and the people have been the most active and industrious, the most enterprising and skilful in all the arts and appliances which support human life that the world can boast of; — they have taken the land which but a few years ago was owned by savages and traversed by wild beasts of the forest; and by incessant toil, and

determined perseverance, they have completely changed its entire aspect — the solemn silence of the vast solitudes has been broken by the cheerful voice of men and happy communities. Immense lakes, rivers and seas are covered with ships — the forests have yielded to the axe; the plains and Rivers are spanned by Railways — and the mighty Empire is linked together by electric wires which flash and pulsate with intelligence from Cape Cod to San Francisco, and from New Orleans to the utmost limits of Canada.

It is almost impossible for an Englishman to convey a just idea of the area of the mighty Republic of the United States — from the Lands-End to Berwick on the Tweed is Englands greatest length; but this is many miles shorter than even the distance from Washington to Lexington. The valley of the Thames would be hidden from sight in a corner of the Sierra Madra. The state of Oregon is larger than England itself. California is the size of Spain. Texas would still have been larger than France even if the latter had won the frontier of the German Rhine. If the United States were divided into fifty two equal parts, they would make fifty two kingdoms as large as England, or you may map out fourteen Empires as large as France. Even Europe itself which our forefathers looked on as the extent of the world fails in comparison with the amplitudes of the United States. It is further from Eastport to Brownsville than from London to parts of the great

desert of Sahara, further from New York to San Francisco than from Paris to Bagdad. Such reflection on American distances seems to carry us from the region of fact, into the realm of magic and romance.

There are however facts, being resolved, in America, of far higher importance than the rapid growth of the states, the vastness of its territory, the enormous length of its rivers, the size of its lakes, or the extent of its wealth, commerce, and population. The social life of the country, appears to be undergoing great changes. It is developing phases of life and manners, which are not only likely to influence the whole current of the national feeling; but which it is possible may affect nations and churches on this side of the Atlantic to a great, perhaps to an extraordinary degree.

If we look at society in America as it was first evolved in the New England states by the early English settlers, we shall discover in it nothing more than might be expected from the transfer of a certain class of zealous British Puritans to a new sphere of faith and hope, where as they thought they could cut away the trammels of ancient usage and according to the dictates of their conscience worship the God of their fathers. They were men strong and able, very religious and exceedingly obstinate. Left to themselves they carried out a very definite idea of what a free state should be. And from that day to this, they and their descendants have always been the

potent element in the national life. True others have come and settled in the country, and new communities have grown up; so that now there is as great difference of manner and feeling in many respects between the inhabitants of Denver City and those of Boston as we should find between a citizen of the city of London and that of Moscow.

Still the influence of New England predominates in the country from Portland to California; and considering the mettle of the good old Anglo-Saxon Race there is little doubt but that this influence will be permanent.

There are however, three other Races which are competing with the Anglo-Saxon, viz. the Negro, the North American Indian, and the Malay. With the exception of the North American Indian, their races are found in vast and encreasing numbers; and though they are feebler in energy and inferior in intellect, yet their influence on the national life is such that to them may be traced much that is peculiar in the manners, customs and institutions of the United States of America.

In the western regions the rage for gold has drawn together such a mix medley of Races as could scarcely be found elsewhere. Many colors and many creeds crowd into the same town. There an Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Romanist, Mormon and Buddhist, Spiritualist and Materialist, meeting at the same bar and digging in the same mine.

The white man is ubiquitous. He fears neither frost nor heat. Give him food and raiment, he can endure

any climate, undertake any labor and overcome any difficulties. We find him casting nets in the Bay of Fundy, cradling gold in the vallies of Sacramento, and growing dates in almost tropical Florida. In Oregon he is a trapper of beavers and in Texas a raiser of herds of kine. He is a spinner of thread in Massachusetts, a clearer of woods in the forests of Kansas and a smelter of iron at the forges of Pennsylvania.

He can talk largely in the Capitol of Washington and write flippantly in the newspaper of New York — and everywhere this Anglo-Saxon is the same man, possessed of plastic genius, of enduring character, and at home in every clime. He is America's guide, employer, king.

The negro, „the irrepressible nigger“ is localized in the sunney south. The rice fields and the mulberry groves of Alabama are his darling retreats; where with the Banjo on his knee he is as joyous as a bird singing his endless and foolish roundelay. He is a local fact in the country and lately a most important fact.

The Red man has been either driven into the far west or else exterminated. The wild man and the wild beasts have fled before the spades and the ploughshares of the white man. Still he will not lay down his tomahawk. He is ashamed to work and he consequently dies. It is only on the great plains and towards the Rocky mountains that any nations of Red men may now be found.

Since the discovery of gold in California another race has been settling in America in great and increasing numbers. They are the Malays or yellow people. There are already sixty thousand of them in California, Utah and the neighbouring parts of the country. They are supple and patient, ready for any kind of labor, though they prefer that usually performed by women. They will before long greatly influence the labor market. Their sixty thousand will soon be six hundred thousand with all the rights of citizenship. They will elect their own judges and juries; Buddhist temples will rise beside christian churches, polygamy and infanticide beside monogamy; and unless America is willing to wink at horrid and unnatural crimes there looms in the distance a war of races between the beef-eating and rice-feeding races.

Such are some of the broad distinctions which characterize the races at present claiming to be inhabitants, and many of them citizens of the great Transatlantic Republic; who are all influencing and are destined deeply to influence American life. Already the Red man has impressed the love of his pipe over nearly all the world, and his polygamy on some American communities, and the negro has caused one of the most frighful wars ever waged by man.

In speaking of these races destined so greatly to influence American affairs, we do not forget other and less marked distinctions among this people. There are the sedate and soberminded Germans, the volatile

Irish and the heavy Dutchmen; who have each and all contributed much to the manifold peculiarities which we at present witness in the great American community.

We have then before us a country capable of sustaining several hundred millions civilized people; and rich in everything that can minister to the wants and luxuries of human life, we have a country which actually contains thirty millions of people, of people restless and gifted, daring and active, where the full blaze of popular intelligence and uncontrolled discussion is brought to bear on every subject, and where opinions and ideas are tried in a fierce fire which appears to be always at white heat; and the consequence is as we might have expected: strange results have followed. These results we shall notice, as they are full of instruction and warning. We shall take no cognizance in this thesis of the grand old fundamental truths which have been tried in this crucible and have come forth as fine gold; but we shall confine our remarks to those new and fearful elements of thought, which endeavoring to set aside what has been dear to the universal church, are evolving new communities unlike in many respects to any thing which the christian world has yet witnessed.

The Mormons hold a prominent place among the sects about whom a stranger visiting America would naturally make enquiries. It is only thirty years ago that the founder of this sect, Joseph Smith, first began to make converts. The audacity of some of his doctrines,

and the immoral tendency of others, caused him to be driven from his native county; he settled however elsewhere and laid the foundation of a city and temple at Hiawou or „the Beautiful“; where his followers rapidly increased both in numbers and wealth. But here again persecution followed them, „the Prophet“ was killed by an infuriated mob, and his followers despairing of rest, while surrounded by a hostile community, left their homes and gardens, their farms and temples; and venturing into a wilderness surrounded by all the perils of want, floods, and hostile savages, prosecuted a journey which for daring and enterprise has seldom or never been exceeded, at last they made their home on the desolate shores of a Salt Lake; and though the soil was most unfruitful and the whole aspect of the country most unpromising: yet by dint of earnest perseverance, they have raised a magnificent city, which is encircled by waving corn-fields, and luxuriant vine-yards. And what was once a desolate wilderness, now blooms as a Garden of Eden.

We observe in this Mormon sect what we may also notice in many other religious bodies in the United States, viz. the most singular and absurd theological dogmas, the most visionary and wild speculations combined with the keen, practical, worldly common sense of the shrewd Yankee.

In a worldly point of true Mormonism is a great success, their community appears to be well fed, well clothed and educated, their wealth is evidently

abundant, their city peaceful, and their people enjoy an average share of earthly happiness. And all this is the case too in spite of the grossest system of polygamy that has ever been tolerated by civilized people, and of the wildest and most fanatical doctrines that since the christian era have ever been held forth for human belief.

Nothing is easier than to laugh at Mormonism, the story Smith told was not only improvable but highly ridiculous. His pretended discovery of the plates in the „reformed Egyptian“ characters in which „the Book of Mormon“ was written, his finding the prose works of Abraham, the Urim and Thummim, and his Mormon paper money are all things to be smiled at. We feel they are the acts of a mad fanatic, yet, in thinking of the future, will our smile or our anger be able to disperse that resolute camp of twenty thousand men armed with breech loading rifles? Can men's scorn smite down the walls of that „New Jerusalem“? Will it change the Red Indians the Utes and the Shoshones into enemies of the Mormons? Will it stop their missionaries or arrest their work? No the time is gone by, when Mormonism can be treated with laughter or sport, they have become a potent and formidable body with reference to the future of American life, they are now more than two hundred thousand and have fully twenty thousand men bearing arms, men too, who know how to use their arms; for every Mormon is „a Priest“ and „a Soldier“ as well as a laborer. They are also inspired

by one thought, and moved by one will. To them the voice of Mormonism is the voice of Deity, and Brigham Young has only to issue the command, and every man of them will rush to danger, and if need be to death, with that furious devotion, which always inspires the fanatical enthusiast.

Mormonism is rapidly on the increase. Its missionaries sweep the length and breadth of many lands. In the quiet cot of the laborer, at the grimy forge of the smith, amid the toilers everywhere on land, and in the forecastle of the emigrant ship at sea, there you find the Mormon missionaries, there he is anxiously desirous of making a proselyte, plaintively telling the weary sons of toil that for them there is a bright hope in the far west, a happy home there, in a lovely valley, abounding with corn and wine, a home, where chosen bands of heaven, inspired people wait to receive them, where they are ready to share the peace and luxury of the earth with them, where all wants will be supplied, all labor will be worship, and polygamy will be honorable and honored.

Nor are these missionaries laboring in vain. A constant and increasing stream of emigrants flow on towards Deseret and that little state on the borders of the Salt Lake contains in it the germs of great events for the America of the future.

Though Mormonism had its origin in America, it derives its converts from Europe rather than from its own country. The reverse of this seems to be the case with the shakers, another peculiar religious

sect who in many particulars are the very opposite of the followers of Smith. Instead of polygamy the shaker holds that the mission of the True Believer is not to propogate but to minister, they have abjured almost every thing that others hold sacred, they care nothing for the church with its doctrines and formulars, they take no interest in the policy and action of the state, their position, they think in the midst of this struggling and excited world is to weep over its sorrows, and blush for its shame.

The story of the rise of this singular people may be briefly told. About a hundred years ago, a poor woman living at Bolton de Moors, a bleak and grimy town in South Lancashire, began to preach, she told eager listeners that the second advent of Christ was at hand and that his appearance would be in the form of a woman. This person, Jane Wardlan, seems to have been a simpleminded creature, who never appears to have arrogated to herself the messianic honors. She was the wife of a tailor who became one of her first converts. Among her early disciples was a Girl named Ann Lee of Manchester; and it is to her, Mother Ann Lee as she is called, that the American communities owe their origin; for having formed around her a small body of „Believers“ they migrated to that country and there grew up to their present dimensions. The leading features of the announcement's Mother, Ann Lee, made to the world may be summed up thus.

The church of the future is an American church.

The old law is abolished, the new dispensation is begun.

Intercourse between heaven and earth is restored. God is king and governor.

The sin of Adam is atoned, a man is made free from all errors except his own.

Every human being will be saved.

The Earth is now soiled and stained, but it is ready to be brightened by love and labor into its primeval state.

The shakers like the Mormons have made their farms luxuriantly beautiful.

Those who wish to find a still more extreme sect may discover it in a community of persons, generally named after the locality of their chief settlement „the Oneida Society“. The Mormon as we have seen has a plurality of wives. And it is said, a man must marry a certain number of women, before he can hope to rise to any eminent office in the sect. The shaker on the other hand regards all love between the sexes as evil, except spiritual love, or at all events only to be tolerated in worldly and ungodly people; but it is to be looked upon as a thing derogatory to the „twice born who belong to the resurrection order“ and who believe in the resurrection of the natural body. The community however at Onieda Creek abjure both these doctrines. They neither marry as the Mormons, nor as is the universal custom among christians. Nor do they live as the shakers: they are Pantogamists, the three hundred

persons living there, have all things even the men and women, in common.

Mr. Noyes the founder of this sect seems to be regarded by his own people in the light of a Prophet. His career has been a rough one, his labors great, and his failures, many. „The Bible Family“ as they call themselves are rich and increasing in wealth. And looked at as a commercial speculation its success is greater perhaps than that of Mormonism.

It may be that the principle of communism, which lies at the base of all these societies, gives them their power, or perhaps it is the temperance of their lives, or it may be the devotion with which they aid each other; but certain it is that no people are better clothed, fed or educated, or are farther removed from the heavier cares of this life, than these strange communities of which we have been speaking.

The sect however which is best known in Europe of any that is peculiarly American is that of the spiritualists, a form of belief which is very prevalent in one shape or other, but which has received a developement across the Atlantic different from that which has been exhibited elsewhere.

The spiritualists may be reckoned at several millions, and are a growing and energetic body, you find them in every rank and grade of society. Statesmen and judges — physicians and authors — artisans and negroes. And their organisation is powerful, they have their lecture halls and lyceums, their newspapers and ponderous volumes although no intelligent thin-

king man can dwell for a moment on their system without feeling that it has in it an immense amount of imposture and knavery.

Spiritualism doubtless owes its origin to the shakers, although not many among them will admit the fact. The person generally looked up to, as the originator of the movement is Andrew Jackson Davis, who styles himself the Pantoskeptic Seer and clairvoyant. He is a voluminous author and has greatly influenced American thought. The first work by which Davis was known in this country was his „Principles of nature in her Divine Revelations“, published by M. Chapman about twenty years ago. M. Chapman was the Editor of the Westminster Review and wrote an elaborate introduction to the work, which doubtless gave it a currency in this country it would not otherwise have attained. The two large volumes were a complete enigma to the literary world, they profess to have been dictated to a youth of eighteen whilst in the magnetic sleep, yet the work was a clever and extensive review of the material and spiritual universe, tracing the developement of the solar system and more especially of our Earth from its first embryo state of liquid fire down through all its revolutions until the appearance of man upon it. Prehistoric man was then dwelt on and traced through many thousands of years, then the monumental and written history of the human race was discoursed on; and after that an analysis was given of the sacred books of the world, their principles and objects,

with the time of their compilation. This was followed by a disquisition on the nature of man, and an outline of his destiny, including a review of all the communistic schemes for his improvement; a predicting a new state of society in which ignorance and vice should be exterminated, and truth and peace reign uninterrupted. It was a wonderful book; and the evidence that it was dictated by a shoemaker's boy appeared quite certain, where he got it from was a puzzle, not quite so easy to solve.

In his Autobiography „the magic staff“ Davis has given an interesting account of the manner in which he grew up, and how the clairvoyant faculty was developed in him. He has also in his „great Harmonium“ given his views more at large on every subject of human reform. He was the Pionier of all that is now boasted of in American „spiritual“ circles. He prepared the public mind for the „wonders“ which were in store for it, and the Mrs. Fox and other mediums soon displayed phenomena; which while receiving implicit credit from „the Believer“, puzzle the man of science and leave people in general aghast upon what seems to them the threshold of the spirit world.

The preteritions of the spiritualists are wonderful in their audacity. They tell you that not only are heavy bodies removed from one place to another, without human agency; but also that musical instruments are tuned and played, and that men and women are raised into the air and transported from one place to another by unseen forces.

But the claims upon the senses are small in comparison with those made upon the understanding. They tell us that an uneducated lad will under the spell of an invisible being, become wiser and more lucid than the greatest sage, that an old woman who knows no language thoroughly, not even her mother tongue, can under this influence speak correctly in fifty or any other number of tongues; that others by applying a fossil or a piece of rock to the forehead can tell you all you wish to know about the ancient world and, although they know nothing of comparative anatomy, can rival Cuvier or Owen in the reconstruction of the Iguanodon or any extinct species of animals. Nay, more than this, they declare that seeing the nature of man, they can define the precise relation between the seen and the unseen; and thus indicate what earthly conditions are best adopted to the growth of spiritual life. And beyond all this, they profess to derive their knowledge of music, poetry, painting, and theology from what they declare to be the source of all harmony, love and truth; viz. „the spiritual spheres.“

It would be vain to enter into any discussion on the merits of such wild pretensions in a brief essay like this. But one thing is certain, abounding as „spiritualism“ is in error and fanaticism, it is nevertheless at this moment a most powerful, a numerous, if not the most numerous sect in America.

But beyond and as it were underneath all these organisations there are other agencies at work which

although hidden from the eye, and having no public representative, are nevertheless producing great changes. Among these, the proportion of the sexes in America, is an important phenomenon. At the last census the males numbered seven hundred thousand over the females. This preponderance of man, is the bane of the country. Thousands of males are living in a state of forced bachelorship; and the women are running into all manner of absurdities, about „Women's rights“, „Women's suffrage“, and „the superiority of the female over the male“, in consequence of this disparity of numbers.

In the New England states there are also other facts to be noted which deserve serious consideration. The frequency of divorce is so fearfully prevalent that in some of them there has been a separation of husband and wife in one out of every eighteen families (see American Review 1867). And beyond this there is an understanding among the philosophical ladies that they will not have children.

The Boston Philosopher in Petticoats is quite above the sphere of motherhood, she thinks the nursery degrading, and hence the tables of population show that, should the present state of things continue, the prestige of the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers will soon be gone. They will be a name but not a power in America.

And now what are we to infer from all this outburst of wild religious zeal and fanatical enthusiasm of which we have been speaking?

Will the end be superstition or indifference, decay and desolation? We trust not. The signs of all these loom ominously enough in the distance, we must allow. But truth is great and must prevail. When America has proved all things we trust she will hold fast that which is good, that which is truth, and the consequence will then be, that we shall see arise faith more exalted, and a devotion more pure. Things are now seen there in the morning dawn when the shadows are long and the valleys dark; but we trust a bright noon day is hastening on, replete with brightness and sunshine, and that America's future may be glorious.